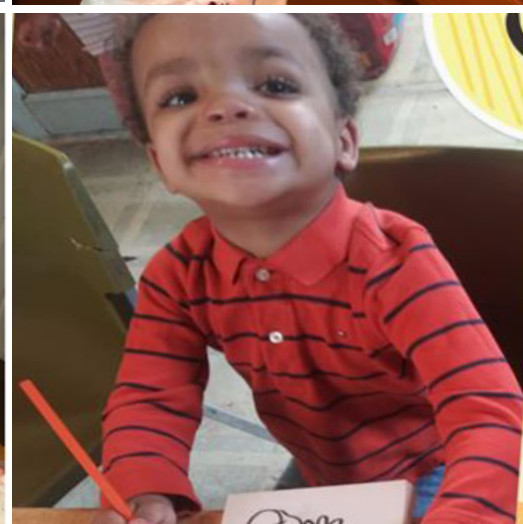
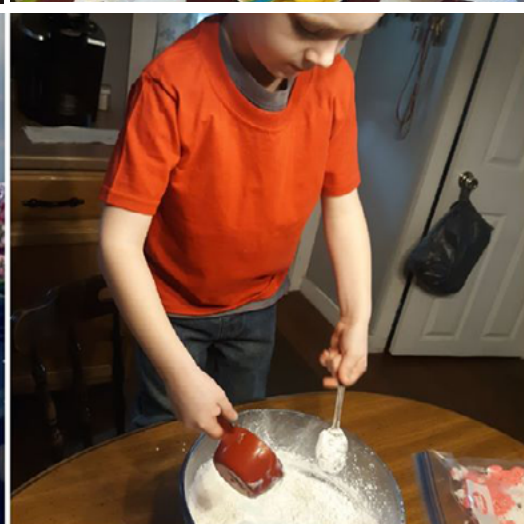




Newsletter



STEP Head Start

Virtual

**Week of the
Young Child™**

Spring
2020

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COVID-19 Response

STEP's facilities are currently closed to customer walk-ins, but most of the agency's services – considered essential – continue to offer assistance to individuals and families, many of whom are navigating social assistance for the first time due to COVID-19.

"STEP is committed to protecting the health and wellness of our customers and staff, while continuing to provide life-sustaining and self-sufficiency services. We will continue to monitor the situation daily and make additional and measured changes as appropriate," said Jim Plankenhorn, STEP President & CEO.

In addition to the facility restrictions, all staff and customers are required to wear masks and the following changes are occurring in some of STEP's programs. For an up-to-date list, visit www.stepcorp.org.

- **STEP Service Navigation:** If you are not sure if STEP can help you, or are not sure what resources are available in the community, please contact STEP at 570.326.0587 or via email at step@stepcorp.org, and they will help you navigate available resources. The general registration form and service assessment questionnaire can be found at www.stepcorp.org under "Register Now" at the top of every page.
- **STEP Supportive Housing Program** is focused on helping individuals avoid foreclosure or eviction. Eligible customers do not have an eviction notice or outstanding judgments, do have household income, and have lived in Lycoming County for the last 12 months or most of the last two years. Further eligibility criteria apply; call 570.601.9545 for details.
- **STEP Transportation** is providing life-sustaining trips. This includes medical appointments, grocery shopping, and transportation to work. In accordance with PennDot guidance and MATP requirements, masks are required for all transportation customers and drivers. Call 570.323.7575.
- **STEP Utilities Assistance Program** is still operating. PPL OnTrack applications can be completed at pplelectric.com/ontrack. All utilities inquiries, including questions about the UGI CAP program, can be directed to STEP at 570.326.0587.
- **STEP Early Learning Resource Center for Region 7** is available to support caregivers seeking child care and providers. Call 570.327.5495.
- **STEP Head Start** programs are suspended until further notice, in accordance with the PA statewide school closure announced by Governor Wolf. Head Start staff continue to engage with students and their families.
- **STEP Office of Aging:** STEP Centers for Healthy Aging are closed until further notice, however the Center Coordinators can still be reached on their center phone lines or through the main office. Center Coordinators are organizing virtual workouts and sharing videos on facebook and the STEP website. Meals on Wheels will continue to be delivered with precautions to protect vulnerable populations. You can call STEP Office of Aging at 570.326.3096 to sign up for Meals on Wheels. AARP Tax-Aide has been suspended until further notice. Protective Services and social services for older adults are still available.
- **Lycoming County and Clinton County Long Term Care Ombudsmen** are also still available to assist with any concerns or questions that come up for you or your loved one residing in nursing homes, personal care homes, and older adult daily living centers. You can reach your local Ombudsman at 570.601.9557.

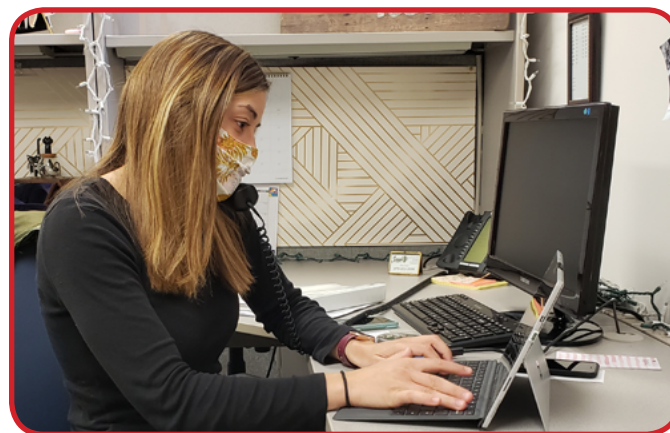
Questions about other programs can be directed to STEP at 570.326.0587 or 570.858.5800.

STEP Essential Services CONTINUE THROUGH PANDEMIC

As a provider of several essential services, STEP has been modifying operations to protect customers and staff as much as possible. However, some programs continue to require face-to-face contact. Employees in STEP Transportation, Housing, and Office of Aging are providing essential services that cannot be delivered remotely.

For customers with life-sustaining needs, including medical appointments and grocery trips, STEP Transportation is providing a much-needed service. STEP's Housing Options Pathway is now providing weatherization and crisis repairs, as construction services were allowed to resume. STEP Office of Aging staff are on standby for protective service investigations, should the need arise. Most other STEP services are being delivered through methods that reduce or eliminate face-to-face contact for customers and staff.

"STEP is committed to protecting the health and wellness of our customers and staff, while continuing to provide life-sustaining and self-sufficiency services," said Jim Plankenhorn, STEP President & CEO, continuing, "I want to thank everyone for their patience and understanding during these uncertain times, and especially our great staff and volunteers who are so dedicated to our mission and values."



United Way Book Donation

The love of reading was celebrated at STEP Round Hills Campus in February, including a donation of books from the Lycoming County United Way.

"We were awarded such a large grant amount and so many books. These are great books, so we really wanted to make sure we spread them out as much as we can, so they touch all over the community," Brittany Fischer, Vice President for Community Impact of the United Way, said.

Each child at the Round Hills Campus received a book with a personalized message inside, penned by volunteers who had worked earlier in the week.

Williamsport Mayor Derek Slaughter joined the group from the United Way in "Spreading the Love of Reading" to area preschoolers - a thematic tie-in to Valentines weekend - by reading to children.

"It's good to get out in the community and read to the little kids," commented Mayor Slaughter. "Any day you can interact with the little kids is always a good day," he said.



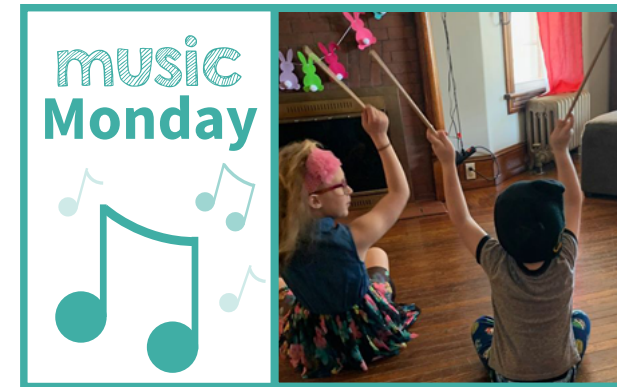
STEP Head Start

Virtual Week of the Young Child™ #WOYC2020

STEP Head Start celebrated *Virtual Week of the Young Child* (WOYC) from April 12-18. The Week of the Young Child is an annual observance hosted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC celebrates early learning, young children, their teachers, and their families across the globe.

Even with different circumstances during the COVID-19 crisis, STEP Head Start families and staff found creative ways to celebrate young children, the community, educators, and families virtually this year! The week's activities included Music Monday, Tasty Tuesday, Work Together Wednesday, Artsy Thursday, and Family Friday.

Thank you to all who shared photos and videos with us to make #WOYC2020 a unique and amazing Week of the Young Child!



Music Monday

Through music, children develop math, language, and literacy skills - all while having fun and being active!

STEP Head Start challenged our families to show off dance moves, play music with homemade or real instruments, and sing *Happy Birthday* twice while washing hands.



Tasty Tuesday

Cooking together connects math with literacy skills, science, and more. Head Start encourages healthy nutrition and fitness habits.

Families shared images of cooking together, made sensory play recipes, and used their five senses to explore food!



Work Together Wednesday

When children build together, they explore math and science concepts, and develop their social and early literacy skills.

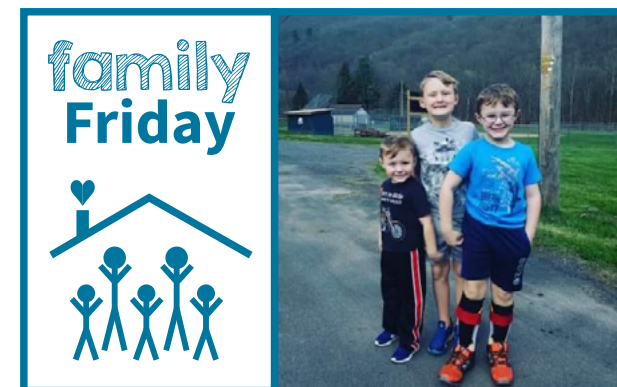
Head Start children and their families worked together to create some great things, including constructing blanket forts, building sand castles, and planting seeds.



Artsy Thursday

Children develop creativity, social skills, and fine motor skills with open-ended art projects where they can make choices, use their imaginations, and create with their hands.

Children were encouraged to get creative at home! Painting, dyeing eggs, and making sand art were among the projects submitted.



Family Friday

Engaging and celebrating families is at the heart of supporting our youngest learners. We applaud family members' role as young children's first and most important teachers.

Families were asked to share photos and make time to video chat with extended family members.

Loyalsock

Center for Healthy Aging

Eight months after breaking ground in late June 2019, STEP's Loyalsock Center for Healthy Aging opened its doors on Monday, March 2, 2020. The planned Grand Opening celebration, previously slated for March 12, was quickly put on hold for everyone to "Stay Home, Stay Safe, and Stay Healthy." An Open House for the new center will be planned, stay tuned for more details!

While all eight of STEP's Centers for Healthy Aging are temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Center Coordinators continue to engage with participants, and customers can also access many services offered by STEP Office of Aging including Meals on Wheels, Care Management, and Adult Protective Services by calling 570.323.3096.

STEP has also added a library of online wellness resources including at home workouts for Zumba and Healthy Steps in Motion, as well as tips and tricks for eating from your pantry, a weekly recipe series from STEP's *Healthy Aging through Local Harvest* cooking program. These resources and more can be found at <https://bit.ly/STEPcenters>.



EVERYONE COUNTS!

CENSUS 2020



The 2020 Census is underway and households across America are responding every day. The count is mandated by the Constitution and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, a nonpartisan government agency. Each home should have received an invitation to respond to a short questionnaire—online, by phone, or by mail—between March 12-20. The census provides critical data that lawmakers, business owners, teachers, and many others use to provide daily services, products, and support for you and your community.

Every year, billions of dollars in federal funding go to hospitals, fire departments, schools, roads, and other resources based on census data. The results of the census also determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives, and they are used to draw congressional and state legislative districts.

To respond to the census, visit: www.2020census.gov.

Pictured below, Loyalsock Center Coordinator Kathryn Stevenson provides assistance to a new customer on March 5, shortly after the expanded center opened.



WHY does my response matter?


Over **\$657 billion** in federal funds are spent according to census numbers.

It also affects representation and redistricting!

WHAT PROGRAMS in my community are affected by census numbers?

- WIC
- CHIP
- LIHEAP
- Section 8
- Weatherization
- Child Care
- Emergency Food & Shelters

And many, many more!





Retiree Spotlight

With the onslaught of COVID-19, I am very glad that I am retired and that my retirement funds are no longer in the stock market. I appreciate all the STEP employees carrying out their work in meeting the needs of the various populations they serve by utilizing innovative methods during this present situation.

Joyce and I greatly enjoyed and were very impressed with the retirement celebration provided by STEP. We followed that celebration with one of our own in mid-summer. We hosted a wonderful all day picnic of over 20 of our college friends and spouses from our campus Christian Fellowship, some of these friends we had not seen since graduation. We explored the Creation Museum and Noah's Ark replica in Kentucky in late summer. STEP had provided the tickets and travel funds as a retirement gift. We also enjoyed going to a record number of yard sales during times we would normally be working. I consider my best deal the purchase of a Thomas Kinkade print for \$10. I just had to clean it up and touch up the frame. The rest of our summer was mostly occupied by caring for our two grandsons most weekdays and enjoying all the time we had to enjoy the outdoors.

We entered the school year as the after school program for our grandsons. Along with assisting with homework, we play a lot of challenging games like Go Fish, Bounce, card games, and board games including Charlie Brown Christmas, Eye Found It, Jurassic World Volcano Escape, Uncle Wiggley, and many versions of race tracks and train sets. In addition, we now have our home decorated with innumerable Lego sets. The COVID-19 outbreak made us the educators for our grandsons. Of course Joyce is the primary teacher, I am just the classroom aide.



As you can see most of our lives revolve around our grandsons, but I was able to volunteer to help sort and pack boxes for STEP's Santa's Seniors Program at Christmas. From Mid-January until the program ended due to COVID-19, I was enjoying performing income tax preparation for STEP's AARP Tax-Aide Program. Joyce and I have also been volunteering once a month with the food bank to assist in packing food boxes for distribution. We also stay very involved with our local church, The Door Fellowship, including hosting a virtual small group meeting using Zoom.

Fred Shrimp
Former Director
STEP Office of Aging



Mark Your Calendar!



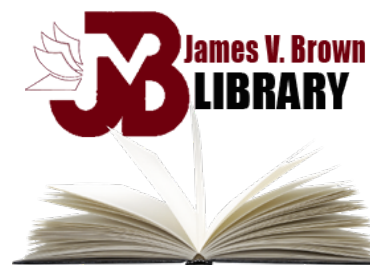
Student Enrollment



STEP Head Start - Student Enrollment! Going on NOW!

STEP Head Start is accepting applications for the 2020-2021 school year. Preschool children in Lycoming and Clinton counties, including those with disabilities, are eligible for enrollment. Head Start accepts applications year-round, and fills vacancies from its waiting list as they occur. While children from low-income families have enrollment priority, children from higher-income families may be enrolled as well.

Download and complete your child's Head Start application online at <https://www.stepcorp.org/step-pathways/early-learning/head-start.html>. Completed applications can be emailed to Donna Flick at dlflick@stepcorp.org or dropped off at the STEP office at 2138 Lincoln Street, Williamsport.



Virtual Book Club for Adults Hosted by James V. Brown Library

Join the James V. Brown Library for a Virtual Book Club! You must email dbrigandi@jvbrown.edu or call 570.327.2957 for a link to access the club!



No Small Matter Monday, October 5 at 7:00 PM Community Arts Center | 220 W. 4th Street Williamsport

Join us for a FREE documentary screening of No Small Matter in honor of Week of the Young Child. A panel discussion will be held after the screening.

FREE tickets to the event are available through Early Learning Ambassadors as well as the Early Learning Resource Center Region 7 offices:

2138 Lincoln Street, Williamsport
124 East Walnut Street, Lock Haven
5 East Avenue, Wellsboro

This event is hosted by the Early Learning Resource Center Region 7 Local Leadership Council, The Early Learning Ambassadors, and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning's 2019-2020 Governor's Institute. For more information call 570.327.5495.



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